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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

10 June 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR THE NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD

SUBJECT: Interagency Intelligence Memorandum - Assessment of Developments  
in Angola

This memorandum was requested by the Department of State; it has been coordinated at a working level within the Intelligence Community, but has not been reviewed further because of pressure of time.

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National Intelligence Officer  
for Africa

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Attachment  
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INTERAGENCY INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Assessment of Developments in Angola

KEY JUDGMENTS

The Neto regime has been weakened and its long-term prospects are much dimmer as a result of recent developments, deteriorating economic and social conditions in Angola, increased resentment against the growing Cuban involvement, and insurgent successes.

Nevertheless, with determined Cuban support, Neto is likely to survive the current crisis. No dissident faction nor any insurgent group acting alone possesses the capacity to overthrow the government, although insurgents may expand somewhat or consolidate their position in territory they now hold. We have no clear evidence that insurgents or dissidents are planning to combine their forces, and we believe that the crackdown now underway against the regime's opponents as well as the persisting differences among them will hinder any cohesive anti-regime effort in the next few months.

The current turmoil is rooted in racial and factional divisions (mulatto-black, civilian-military)

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which have existed within the Popular Movement since it was founded in 1956. No purge can eliminate them or even suppress them for long.

We believe that in these circumstances the Neto government will be forced into increasing dependence on the Cubans. Although the Angolan commitment is increasingly burdensome, the Cuban government now appears willing to commit additional resources to assure the survival of the Neto regime, and we believe that Havana will continue to do so unless the military situation becomes untenable or the USSR presses for a major shift toward a policy of compromise.

Although other African leaders are increasingly uneasy about the situation in Angola, we foresee no significant shifts in Neto's relationships with the OAU governments.

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DISCUSSION

MPLA Internal Problems

1. The uprising on 27 May in Luanda began primarily as an effort to secure the release of two dissident leaders, Nito Alves and Jose van Dunem, from prison. Broadcasts made while the dissidents had control of the radio station, however, triggered a number of spontaneous but uncoordinated moves against the government in Luanda as well as lesser disturbances in the provinces and among several military units.

2. The uprising revealed widespread dissatisfaction with the Neto regime among both officials and the population at large, but it also exposed to Neto's security organs many within the government, the party, and the military who were hostile to his leadership. As soon as Neto with Cuban support had reasserted command, the government initiated a major purge, arresting hundreds of dissidents in Luanda and provinces. While the purge has temporarily reduced the ability of Neto's opponents to challenge his leadership, the uprising highlighted fundamental weaknesses of the Popular Movement (MPLA) leadership. Neither Neto nor any likely successor will be able to alleviate Angola's serious economic and social problems as long as he remains unwilling to compromise with the insurgent movements. A few thousand additional Cuban troops may prevent the military situation from deteriorating further but they will be unable to solve the basic problem. Without stability in the interior, economic reconstruction cannot even begin. Other ambitious Angolan leaders, regardless of ideology, will attempt to build their own bases of power by exploiting Neto's inability to improve the situation.

3. The uprising presumably placed substantial emotional as well as political strains on Neto himself.

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X1 [redacted] his departure probably would not signal the end of MPLA control over the government. Other party leaders of the Neto faction would step in, and at least initially follow the established line.

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Sources of Disaffection

4. The most serious threat to the Neto regime comes from the Alves faction, which draws support from the slum areas surrounding Luanda where Alves has tapped popular discontent over critical food shortages and deteriorating economic and social conditions--problems which have been aggravated by recent insurgent successes in the south. He also makes racist appeals to the resentments against the advice and visible presence of Cubans and Soviets as foreigners and nonblacks.

5. Both unemployed black Angolans and radicals in the military are attracted to Alves' arguments that blacks are inadequately represented at the top levels of the party and the military and that mulattos have gained a disproportionate share of power and of the sweeter fruits of the revolution. The dominant position Cubans are assuming in the army and the government is also producing widespread discontent. In recent months, Cuban troops have seemed reluctant to engage insurgent forces, and this has intensified frictions between government and Cuban troops. Angola's military and economic difficulties, moreover, have forced Neto to look increasingly to other countries, particularly Cuba, for assistance; this will strengthen Alves' claim that Neto has rejected a black, nationalist solution to Angola's problems.

6. Many senior army officers will support in principal efforts to rid the government and the army of corrupt and incompetent leaders and those who have misused their powers during the liberation struggle and since the Popular Movement assumed control. Although some of the officers who share this view appear

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X1 to have close ties to the Alves faction, the failure of the uprising and the subsequent purges will probably prevent them for the time being from organizing an effective opposition movement. There is a chance, however, that in purging too many, or in using Cubans too overtly, Neto may provoke a more serious revolt. Our knowledge of MPLA [ ] at this time is not sufficient to rule this out.

7. In addition to the militants of the Alves faction, a group called the Active Revolt, which draws its support from the better educated and more moderate elements in the MPLA, has opposed the Neto government since its formation. Although the Active Revolt is the only dissident faction with enough intellectual talent to set up an alternative government, most of its leaders are in jail or in exile, and it lacks a popular base.

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The Insurgent Threat

10. The uprising on 27 May undoubtedly gave the insurgent forces fresh hopes for eventual victory over the MPLA. So long as Cuba maintains a substantial military presence in the country, however, there is almost no chance that any of the three major insurgent groups could capture Luanda or otherwise bring down the Neto government.

11. Savimbi's forces, estimated at about 7,000 men, control almost all of Angola around the Benguela railroad and to the south, with the exception of the coast and the major towns--and most of the latter are encircled by National Union guerrillas. As a result of recent guerrilla successes, rail traffic in southern Angola has been impeded, the supply of food to the coast has been disrupted, and the morale of government as well as Cuban troops has seriously declined. Extension of the MPLA purge to the countryside will only further impede the government troops' capacity and willingness to engage insurgent forces.

12. Savimbi appears to be shifting his emphasis toward building a working political structure than with further extending his territorial base. National Union forces operate almost exclusively in their own tribal area, and this accounts in large part for the success of their operations. If the National Union were to capture Luanda and seize control of the government--a virtual impossibility so long as Cuba maintains its commitment to defend the Neto regime--it would be confronted with a number of the same fundamental problems that now beset the Neto regime. Savimbi's movement has kept going militarily on accumulated stores and captured materiel and some continuing assistance from the South Africans.

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13. Holden Roberto's claim that his forces--possibly 3,000 to 5,000--control over one-third of the countryside is highly exaggerated. Although Roberto has been able

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to wage a guerrilla war of surprising tenaciousness in northern Angola, his troops are poorly equipped and organized, and his effort is not likely to expand significantly.

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14. The Cabindan insurgents belonging to the Front for the Liberation of Cabinda (FLEC), numbering possibly 500 armed men, likewise pose no immediate political threat. Although they have attempted to step up guerrilla operations in recent months and now claim "control" over two-thirds of Cabinda, the territory is probably contested by both sides rather than controlled by one or the other.

15. Cabinda is occupied by several thousand MPLA and Cuban troops; this reflects the economic importance to the MPLA of the Gulf Oil installations. Gulf is vulnerable to hit-and-run attack, and if significant damage were done, this would be a major psychological and material blow to the Neto government. If the guerrillas succeeded in forcing Gulf to stop production--either through guerrilla action or through intimidation--this would have a serious impact on the economy because the Gulf operations provide Angola with its only major source of foreign revenue. From what we know at present, we do not believe that FLEC can accomplish this.

16. Although there have been contacts between FLEC and UNITA, we do not think an alliance between these two movements or between UNITA and Roberto's FNLA would have significant consequences, and we see virtually no chance of a workable union of all three insurgent groups.

Prospects for Compromise

17. Neto is under increasing pressure from Zambian President Kaunda--and possibly the Soviets and other leaders of the "front-line" states--to reach a political

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accommodation with Savimbi, but he has steadfastly refused to do so. So far the Cubans have backed Neto's refusal to treat with Savimbi and it is unlikely that Neto's current difficulties will lead him to change his mind.

18. It is equally unlikely that Castro will push for an accommodation unless the military situation becomes untenable or the Soviet Union begins to exert strong pressure for a negotiated settlement. Savimbi, moreover, would probably have great difficulty convincing his supporters to accept a compromise given their recent military successes.

#### The State of Angola

19. Neto's hold on the country thus varies widely. The southern countryside, behind the coastal mountain range, is out of his hands for all practical purposes. So are some areas of the north. In the other half or less of the country, Neto's writ still runs where he has local tribal support or where Cuban assistance keeps the administrative machinery going but at minimal speed. Unless the Cubans are willing to make a very major, long-term military commitment to "pacification," Neto is likely to remain in control of only part of the country, and his regime's performance in that part will suffer from its inability to make its writ run in the rest. This, together with the persisting factionalism in the MPLA itself, argues for a fundamentally unstable situation for Neto for the indefinite future.

#### The Cuban Commitment

20. The MPLA's need for Cuban military aid is obvious:

--The MPLA has always depended heavily on Cuban forces for its military advantage over rival nationalist movements. This need is increasing, and a substantial reinforcement appears to be underway.

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--The failure of the Angolan-based invasion of Zaire has kindled Angolan fears of Zairian military retaliation.

--Now, following the uprising of 27 May, Neto apparently must rely on Cuban backing against important elements within his own government. One effect of the uprising may be that he will now place more faith in the Cubans than in many of those Angolans closest to him. In any event he will be forced to rely ever more heavily on Cuban support unless he can reduce opposition to him from MPLA dissidents or, much less likely, achieve a compromise with Savimbi.

21. The Cuban military involvement in Angola has been deeper than either had anticipated. How long Cuba remains able and willing to provide this high level of support probably holds the key to the future of the Neto regime.

22. The Cuban government is clearly disturbed by the situation it faces in Angola. What appeared last year as an easy triumph for Cuban "internationalism" has now assumed the characteristics of a quagmire. So long as Castro continues to receive full Soviet backing he probably would be willing to commit additional civilian resources and combat troops to assure the survival of the Neto regime.

23. Fresh troops should be able to mount a more successful campaign against the insurgents. At the very least, they should be able to contain the insurgent forces throughout this summer's dry season when guerrilla forces are most vulnerable to attack, even though UNITA reportedly plans some aggressive operations. Cuban troops probably will also be called upon to assume increasingly important security functions within MPLA territory, although this could provoke a major backlash. Castro and Neto presumably are aware of this problem, but view it as a minor concern when compared to the fundamental problem of survival.

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### The Soviet Factor

24. If Angola depends most directly upon Cuban troops and technicians, it also needs Soviet arms, political support, and economic aid. The recent uprising, however, may have introduced an element of suspicion into the Luanda-Moscow relationship. Neto has publicly accused "certain embassies" of fomenting unrest in Luanda, and there are tentative indications that these remarks reflect a suspicion that the USSR has been involved with the dissidents. While we do not believe that there was Soviet involvement with Alves' recent activities, they cultivated him in the past as a member of the government.

25. Even if Neto is unable to discover any firm evidence of Soviet complicity with Alves, Neto's suspicion of their involvement may well prompt to search for alternative supporters in the West--he has expressed continued interest in normalizing relations with the United States--and to reduce, if possible, his reliance upon the USSR. Backing away from the Soviets while continuing to embrace the Cubans might be a difficult maneuver, however.

### African States

26. Other African states, except for some of the most radical, have never been happy with Angola's heavy reliance upon external military assistance. They have understood Angola's serious problems but have been uneasy about the large Cuban military presence, which they have accepted only because of South African involvement in the Angolan civil war and the suspicion that the South Africans may be aiding the Luanda regime's enemies.

27. As it becomes clear that Neto depends upon Cuban support, not only against foreign threats but also against dissidents within the regime itself, African respect for the Angolan regime will decline further. This will not have a significant impact on Angola's relations with other African countries, however, with the exception of Zaire.

28. Angola's support of the Katangan invasion of Zaire appears to have been intended, among other things,

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to deter Mobutu from providing further support to the FNLA insurgents. Following the failure of the Katangan invasion (which has apparently strengthened Mobutu's position, at least temporarily), and the trauma of the Luanda uprising, the Angolan regime can ill-afford to antagonize its neighbors. The substitution of Congo for Nigeria as the mediator with Zaire suggests that Angola (possibly with Soviet prompting), may now be willing to accept mediation efforts to settle its disputes with Zaire.

29. The long strain in Angola's relations with Zambia appears to be easing. Zambian President Kaunda has on several occasions urged Neto to reach an accommodation with UNITA, and implied that this was a precondition for better relations. But Kaunda's attention has been diverted from Angolan matters by more pressing southern African concerns, and Zambia will probably continue to move, albeit cautiously, toward normal relations with Angola while remaining uncomfortable with the Neto regime.

30. Except for its relations with its Communist benefactors, however, foreign affairs--even the Namibian issue and the Rhodesian question--probably will be a distinctly secondary concern of the Angolan government in the near future. The all-consuming objective of the Angolan leadership will be to attempt to remain in power in the face of the violent split within the MPLA and continuing challenges from the insurgent movements.

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